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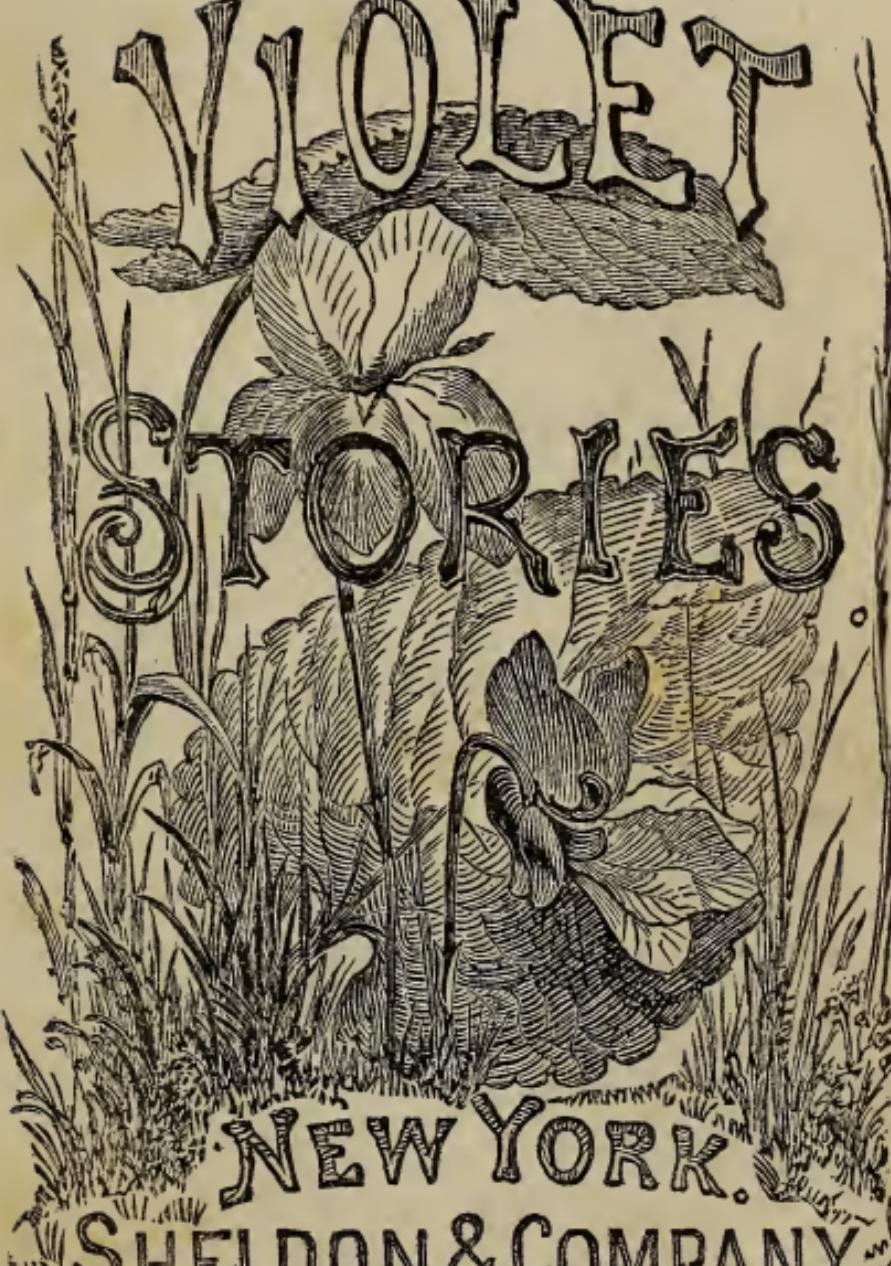
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THE YOUNG ANGLER.



VIOLET  
STORES  
NEW YORK.  
SHELDON & COMPANY

# Bessie's Country Stories.

SIX VOLUMES.

THE SHEEP AND LAMB.

THE YOUNG DONKEY.

THE LITTLE RABBIT-KEEPERS.

THE COCK OF THE WALK.

THE COWS IN THE WATER.

THE YOUNG ANGLER.

Bessie's Country Stories.

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THE

YOUNG ANGLER.

BY THOMAS MILLER.

*ILLUSTRATED.*

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New York:  
SHELDON AND COMPANY.  
1869.

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# The Young Angler.

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T is pleasant to walk beside some inland river, that falls into the sea, and see the young angler sitting under a tree, watching his red float; for when that is pulled under the water he knows a fish has got hold of his hook, and, giving a sharp pull, he has it out in a second, and pops it into his basket. Sometimes a fish gets hold of the bait, that is very strong, and when he pulls, it

pulls too, and breaks his fish-line, then swims away with the hook in its mouth. You would think, after such an escape, it would be cautious, and never make a bite at a fish-hook any more ; but it does not do so, and, perhaps, before he goes home he may catch the very same fish, and find his hook in its mouth. And how often is it the case with us, when we have done something wrong, for which we suffer, that, while the pain lasts, we resolve never to do so again, yet go and do it almost before the pain has gone : but we are worse than a silly little fish, for, when it is tempted by the bait, it does not see the hook, while

we have sense enough to know when we are going to do wrong before we do it.

Some fish are very pretty, and have fins as yellow as gold, and scales as bright as silver ; and it is not cruel to catch them in a net, put them at once into water, then carry them home, and leave them to swim about in a large glass globe, giving them such food as they like to eat, and changing the water very often, so that it may be as fresh and sweet as the stream they lived in before you brought them home. Those white swans go sailing past the young fisherman, and are not at all afraid of him ; and very pretty

they look moving about the water, and they do it so easy too, moving one foot now and then, so as to go slow or quick, just as they please. You see the young angler knows how to fish, through sitting so far back that his shadow does not fall on the water, for, if it did, it would scare the fish, and they would swim away from him, instead of keeping round his red float, which does not frighten them.

I think it is much nicer to live in a pretty village, in summer, than it is to go to the sea side, because there are so many things to be seen in the country which are not to be found in a sea-side town. Round a

village, there are pleasant walks through the fields all among the flowers, and birds singing, and bees buzzing about, and little insects in the air and among the grass ; and pretty white lambs bleating among the daisies, and dear little calves beside the cows, and long-legged foals running races, and leaves always in motion on the trees, as if they had nothing else to do all their lives but dance for joy. And it is so nice to have country brown bread, and sweet butter just churned, and cheese-cakes, and custards made of eggs and cream ; and to have honey, and fruit fresh from the garden, where we have tea in the summer-

house that stands beside the hedge, in which the birds build their nests, and where we can see the young ones if we peep among the branches. Then we sleep so sound at night, after such long walks ; and, when we wake in the morning, we can hear the birds, and the lambs, and the cows ; and the cocks crowing, and the hens cackling, and all sorts of country sounds, that are so pleasant to the ear. And when we peep out of the chamber window, we see the garden, and orchard, and fields, and hills that are a long way off ; and the boy driving cattle to water, and the milkmaid with her milk pail on her head, and carts and

horses moving about, and all the busy stir of village life. And when we walk down the village street, we can stop and see the wheelwright making a wagon, and watch him put the spokes in the wheel ; or look at the blacksmith shoeing a horse, while he holds its foot up beneath his knees, and drives the nails into its hoof without hurting it. Then we pass a farm-house, with beehives and roses before it, and clean milk-pans put out to sweeten ; and see the old sheep-dog, sleeping at the gate in the sunshine ; and the pretty white cat, up in the apple tree, half hidden among the leaves, where it is waiting to catch a bird. Then we

can peep in at the dame-school and see Billy, who has been a bad boy, pinned to the old woman's gown-skirt ; and little Jack, with his thumb in his mouth, crying, because he was playing at marbles on the floor instead of minding his lesson, and the old dame has taken them from him, and is shaking her rod at him, and saying what she will do if he does not give over crying, which, if she does it, will make him cry louder than ever : yet the old woman is kind to them, and will, when they are very good, strew a little sugar on the dry brown bread they bring with them to school ; and all her charge is threepence a week,

which includes teaching them manners, and that is, to make a bow to her when they come in and when they leave school ; and if they forget, which they often do, she shouts out, "Where's your manners, sir ?"

Now the grass begins to seed, and must be mown to make hay to feed the cattle in winter ; and the sound you just now heard was made by the mower, with his rag-stone, as he whetted his scythe to make it sharp, and give it a rough edge, which is the best to cut grass. How hard he works ! what long strokes he takes ! what hundreds of blades of grass and pretty flowers he cuts down at every stroke he takes ! and

look how smooth and level the field is where he has mown it and the grass is raked off!

It is very pleasant to go into the hay-field, and help to make hay, because the more you throw it about the better it is for it. It has to be turned over with hay-forks, and well shaken and dried, before it is put into the wagon, to be carried away by horses, and made into great haystacks with pointed tops. Though there are many hundreds of kinds of grass, there is only one that gives such a nice smell to new hay, and that is called the vernal grass, and very pretty it is.

Then, if the farmer is good-

natured, he will only laugh when he sees you rolling in it, and throwing it over each other, covering up some dear sister or brother with hay, as the little robins did the "Babes in the Wood" with leaves, until not so much as a hand or foot can be seen. There are some grumpy, cross old farmers, who will not let children play with the hay, but are as nice about it being handled as if they had to eat it — I wish they had. Do not go into their hay-fields, for they will not let you have a jolly romp, as if you could do any harm — such grumpies !

Though he does not do it on pur-

pose, sometimes the mower, with his sharp scythe, cuts off the head of some bird or pretty field-mouse, or something that is squatting and hiding in the grass, and afraid to move when it hears the scythe coming near it. I once picked up a corn-crake — such a handsome bird ! — with its head cut clean off in that way ; and you do not know how sorry the mower was for what he had done, when I showed it him, though he could not help it.

Many a pretty little field-mouse's and dormouse's nest is found in the field, after the grass is mown, often with the young ones in, that are quite blind, and have hardly any

hair on them, and are not much larger than a pin. The nests of birds, too, that build on the ground, as a few do, are also found when the grass is cut down early in the season, as it is sometimes; also the nest of the ground bee, and those of many strange insects that burrow in the earth, and of whose habits we know so little.

Now the roses are all in bloom, and throw out such a strong, sweet smell after a shower, that the very wind seems weary as it moves along, under such a load of fragrance. The scarlet stocks are also in flower; and it must bother the bees to know which to go to for

honey, so many blooms as there are to choose from: and the great woodbines, which are also called honeysuckle, now put out their blossoms, streaked with red, white, and yellow, and as long as your fingers; and, when you smell their perfume, you think nothing is half so pleasant, except it be the sweet-brier. In our walks we find the tall crimson foxglove, all speckled inside, and looking amid the green as if there was a fire, while many of them rise up so close that they touch each other. Beside the water-courses we see the blue forget-me-not, which is so pretty a name, and such a dear little flower, that we

take it home and give it to those we love, hoping they will never forget the giver ; and there is no wild flower to compare with it for beauty, unless it be the pretty scarlet pimpernel, which grows by the way-side in places, and is no taller than the white star-shaped chickweed.

The old gardener, who is going home to his little cottage, with the basket and rake over his shoulder, could, if he liked, tell us a good deal about the insects he turns up with his spade, while digging the ground ; of some that he finds which are great grubs, as long as your finger, and turn to beetles ; and others that waken up out of the

earth, and open their great wings and fly about; also the tiny ants, that make a nest in which hundreds live, and seem never at rest except in winter, so busy are they in arranging their eggs, and feeding their young; they are such clever little things that they can make an arched passage on the hard, level gravel walk, with only grains of sand, and along which they can safely walk in and out, without knocking down one single grain; though, were you to kneel and blow hard with your breath, you would make a great gap through it as wide as this book, and not leave a mite of the tunnel standing in the middle of the path-

way. That old gardener could also tell us of insects that attack the gooseberry and currant bushes, while they are in flower, and spin webs over the little green berries, which cause them to drop off and never become ripe ; of the green fly, that spoils so many roses ; of the jumping thrip and the cuckoo-spit, which, when full grown, is about as long as your nail ; and looks like a little tiny frog, though it is a rare fellow to leap, and could, at one bound, spring clean across the table ; he could tell us how one insect lays its eggs in the nest of another, so that, when its young come to life, they feed upon those which were the first

to occupy the nests ; and they, in turn, are eaten by others, which also are at last picked up by the birds, and so on to the end ; for many of the birds are served up as food on our tables.

It must make the birds very happy to fly about and stand pecking among so many sweet flowers ; and to show them to their young ones, which, by this time, are able to fly, though not very far at a time without resting ; and you may always tell a young bird from an old one through its flying so short a distance at a time. But many of our sweet singing birds will soon leave us, and fly to some country over the sea,

where it will be summer when the cold autumn winds are blowing through the hedges in which they built their nest. For the corn is now in ear, and will soon be ripe enough for the reapers to go out with their crooked sickles to cut it down, and gather in the harvest.

And where the forget-me-nots grow beside the long lake-like pond, you will also find the water-lily. When first the water-lily shows itself among the leaves before it opens, it looks like an egg in a green nest; then as it gets larger you might fancy it was a bird sitting among the green leaves in the middle of the water, but when it fully

expands you see a great, grand white flower, as large as a saucer sometimes, and you wonder how it came there, and could almost believe that some water fairy, who was hidden beneath, was holding it up in her hands. If you could look beyond the trees, you would see men and boys busy sheep-washing, which is always done before they clip off the fleece, to make the wool clean, and this is called sheep-shearing. Sheep are good swimmers, and so you would say, if you saw the men take hold of them, and push them about in the water, for no sooner do they take their hands off, than the sheep swims to the bank, where it stands bleating,

while the water makes quite a pool on the ground as it drips from the wool ; then she sees her lambs, and they run up to her and bleat so sadly, seeming to say, " What ever have they been doing to our poor, dear old mother ! Why, bless my heart alive, she's as wet as sop, and I do believe the brutes have been trying to drown her ! Come, cheer up, old girl ! and have a run with us in the sunshine, and you'll be all the better for it, for I see now they've only been washing you, and I am glad of it, for to tell you the truth, you wasn't a bit too clean, but smelt rather strong, and I always caught a lot of sheep-ticks after sleeping

beside you, and I hope they are all drowned, for they are nasty things to bite ; and I should have asked the shepherd to have rubbed you well over with sheep-salve if you hadn't had this ducking instead ; but come along, old girl, and have a run in the sunshine, and you'll soon be dry." And the old sheep says "Baa, baa, baa," which means, "Well, my son, I don't mind if I do." But if it makes the lambs stare again to see the old ewe after she has been washed, you may guess how wide they open their eyes in wonder when they see she has had all the wool clipped off her, and no marvel that, in their way, they ex-

claim, "Well, I never! why, mother, what a guy they have made of you. They have even taken off the old flannel petticoat that used to reach to your heels, and hardly left a bit of anything on your back. What a shame to strip you in the way they have done, when the days will soon begin to draw in, and the nights to get cold, and you'll want an extra blanket to keep you warm. I wonder how they would like to be nearly stripped to the skin, then left to sleep on the cold ground. You had a nasty cough after that ducking, mother, and I shouldn't at all wonder if you have the ague now." And it does seem hard, yet

there is no other way of getting woollen clothes in winter to keep us warm, any more than there is of getting mutton chops, without causing sheep to suffer. Then, by next year, the wool will have grown so much that the sheep will have to be sheared again, and it very often happens, that when their fleeces are so long, they get tangled among the brambles and thorns, and cannot get clear unless some one helps them, or they lose great handfuls of wool in struggling to free themselves. When a boy, I went to a sheep-shearing feast at a farmhouse, and they gave all us boys furmenty in brown porringers, and a

wooden spoon each ; it was made of boiled wheat, spice, sugar, and new milk, and though it was very nice, you could not eat much of it, for you felt after, as if you had eaten rather too freely of small gravel, so heavy was the boiled wheat.

Look at that poor ass, which his master has tied by the leg, instead of leaving him free to have the whole range of the Common ! There seems to be only a few thistles within his reach ; and though he likes such prickly food, he would prefer freedom with it, instead of being tied up as he is. What patience there is in his poor face ! what a gentle look in his eyes ! and I like him all the

more because mention is made of him in the pages of our Holy Bible, as you all know. He knows as well as a child does, when he is spoken to gently and treated kindly, and will prick up his ears and trot on as fast as he can, sooner through a few kind words than he will from cruel blows. Some worthy people are called asses, because they do more than their duty, and save the idle from work, and take trouble upon themselves for the sake of others, who do not deserve such kindness ; and I would rather be such an ass than one of those who called me so, after I had done all the good I could for him ; for the

feeling that we have done our duty is better than thanks from those whose praise comes only from the lips instead of the heart. I once heard of a youth, who, thinking to do something very clever, took up an ass's little foal in his arms, and laid it at the feet of a young lady who had just come from the sea side, saying, as he did so, "A present from Margate." The young lady looked very archly at him, stroked the head of the pretty foal, and said, "Yes, I see it is ; and bears the well-known motto of

" ' When this you see,  
Remember me.' "

Which was very like saying, she

could not look at that ass without thinking it was like the youth who brought it to her, and reminded her of him. I do not think he ever came with a "present from Margate" to that witty young lady again — not even with a little monkey, for fear of the old, well-known motto.

Once I found a hedgehog rolled up tight in a ball, and carried it home, and kept it for many months, feeding it on bread and milk, and leaving it to pick up what it liked best, and that was black beetles, which it found in the coal cupboard. If he shuts himself up in a tight ball, you may roll him about the

floor, and throw him across the room, and he will not open himself do all you can. I was once trying to make him show himself, and threw him, by chance, into a pail of water ; that made him show his nose pretty quick, I can tell you ; though it did him no harm, I think it made him sneeze again.

I used to pass the corner of a rabbit warren, and if I went up very softly to the bank, in which they had made large holes to their nests, and gave a loud whistle or a shout, scores of little rabbits that were about would come full gallop, and run into their burrows so quick, that you hardly caught sight of

them as they stuck up their short, white tails, and went helter-skelter into their holes: and sometimes I used to see young hares playing about, such pretty little brown things as you would have loved to have kept as pets; as I once kept two of them, until they grew big ones, when they made a pie of one and jugged the other. Was it not very cruel, after they had got used to me? But the pie was very nice — so full of rich gravy! and though, I dare say, I cried while eating it, I was more sorry when it was all gone.

And have you never found, my dears, while grieving over some trifling matter which really did not

merit a tear, that if you have a rich raspberry tart in your little hand, you have not yet bitten a piece out of, that the thought of how nice it will eat turns aside the torrent of your grief — diverts the mind, so to speak, from the trouble to the tart, and from the tart to the trouble, until the first bite is made, when your whole mind is at once filled up with the pleasure of the repast, and you dry your pretty eyes, and wonder whether there is any more tart to be had or not? And this is what wise and learned people call philosophy, — a rather hard word, meaning that no trouble can be found too great to prevent us

from minding our tart, if we have got one ; and, if we have not, it will cheer us amid our grief to think that we may have one soon.

What famous places some of those old commons are for blackberries, where the poor people have the right of turning in their asses, cows, and horses to feed ! No one ever thinks of stubbing up the brambles on a wild, free common, and so they are left to grow and spread year after year, becoming so broad, and getting matted so closely, that you cannot reach anything like half way across them to get at the bramble-berries, which hang so black and tempting in the middle,



## NUTTING AND BLACKBERRYING.



so sharp are the hooked thorns. I have seen wild places in England, where, if they would have borne the weight, two wagons might have been driven side by side over the bramble bushes that spread so wide, and were so close, as to form a solid hedge as broad as a large dining-room ; nor could I, by any means, reach the large, ripe berries in the midst of that immease space. Some few of the longest branches might be hooked out with a stick, but there were others you could not reach at all ; and once a boy went with me, and we got two peck-baskets full of blackberries in one afternoon, and a pretty job we had

to carry so heavy a weight home, for each basketful weighed many pounds. It was said that the place in which we got them had never been ploughed nor dug, nor grown anything but what was wild, and came up of itself, since the world began, and it looked as if it had not, it was so savage and wild all over.

There never was such a spot for badgers, foxes, ferrets, stoats, weasels, and wildcats as that, for there was nobody either to shoot or trap them ; nor was there a hare or rabbit to be found within five miles of the place. If the hunter chased a fox and it once got there, the hounds were whipped off the scent, so thick and

close were the hazels, brambles, and gorse-bushes ; and it is well known that a fox can find a way into a hole too small to admit a foxhound. There were also snakes and adders ; and I once saw a black adder a poacher had killed there a yard long. The adder is the only venomous reptile to be found in England. Snakes are as harmless as eels, so are toads and newts. The adder has a deadly poison in its fangs, but there are very few to be found now. As for a snake or a toad they are as harmless as a pretty little kitten, and there is no more venom in them than there is in a ripe sound cherry ; and those who tell you there is,

know nothing at all about them. I do, and tell you a truth, now well known, that there is no venom in either a snake, toad, newt, or frog. When you are a little older, read Bell's "History of British Reptiles," and you will never be afraid of any one of them any more. Too many people hear things, repeat, and believe them, and never once try to prove whether they are true or not. Servants often do so, and frighten children. They say, "blind as a mole," when it can see as well as either you or I; and that the ant "lays up store for the winter," when it sleeps all the time, and never once eats nor wakes again until late in the coming spring.

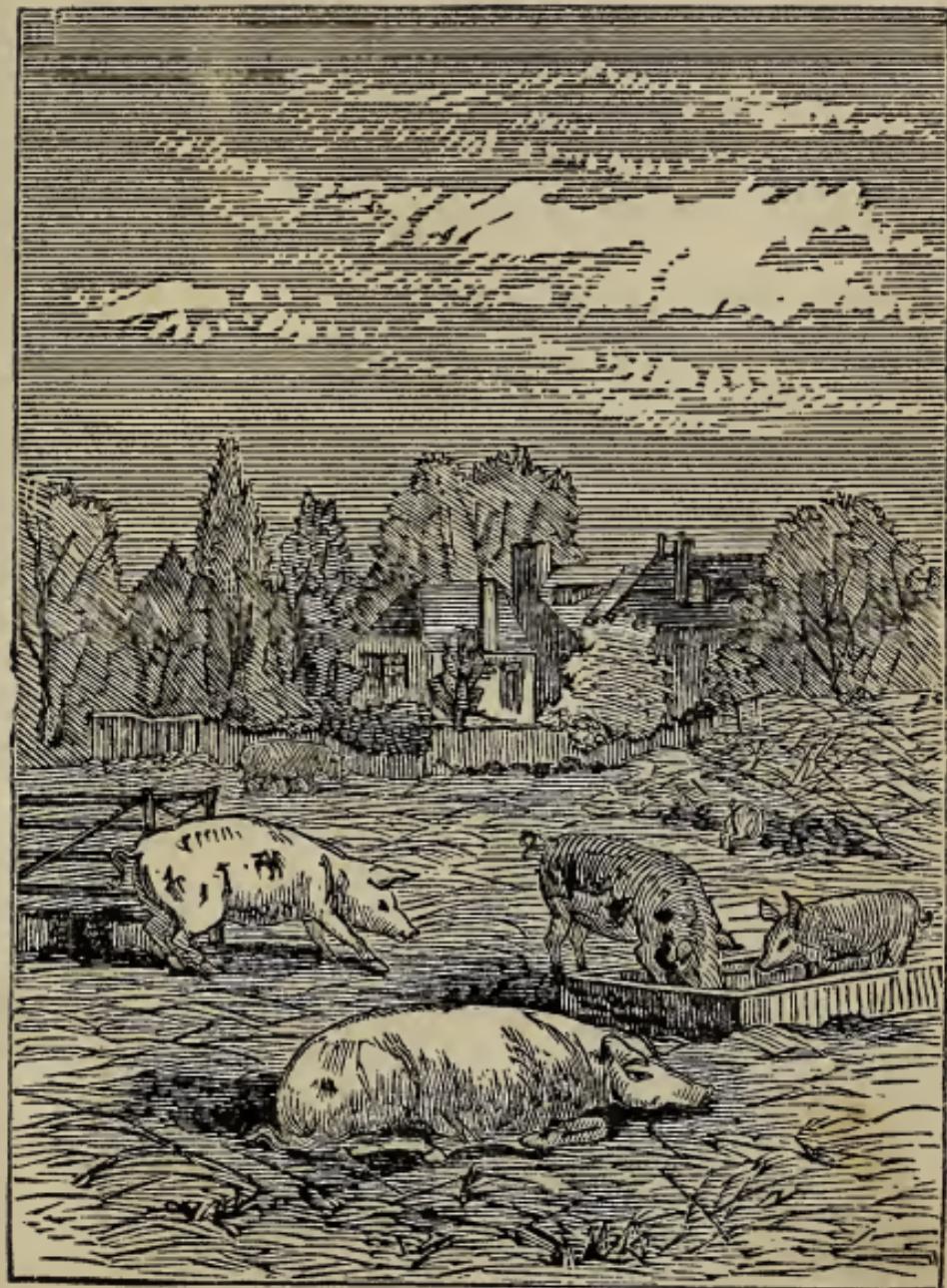
Owls made their nests in the old hollow trees, that grew here and there in this wild-looking spot ; and great, broad-winged hawks built in the branches, and looked down upon the aged crab-trees, and sloe and bullace bushes, which, at the close of autumn, were quite black with the ripe wild plums that hung on them. No apples you ever saw had a more tempting look than those wild crabs at this season ; they seemed so yellow and ripe, and were so richly tinged with red on the sides that caught the sun ; but only bite one, and it would make you screw your mouth up, I can tell you, for no vinegar or lemon that you ever

tasted were ever half so sour as those crabs, that seemed so much like sweet, ripe apples. Then there were smooth, open spaces, where the turf was as soft as a carpet, with patches of purple heath farther on, and great beds of fern, on the edges of which grew thousands of harebells, that only flower at the close of summer. Beyond these, we came, here and there, upon a wild growth of all kinds of shrubs and trees, which there was no passing through — thorns and brambles, hazels and hollies, with trailing ivy and woodbine — all closing round some huge old oak that stood up like a giant above the close thicket.

that hemmed it in. Besides these, there were acres of moist ground, facing the south, that in spring-time were blue and yellow, and green and white, with bluebells, primroses, and lilies-of-the-valley ; and this we used to call the Druid's Garden, and try to fancy that some old Druid lived there many hundreds of years ago, and walked about among those lovely flowers ; for we could not think there ever was a time when they did not grow there, without any other help than that of the sunshine and the gentle rain.

Those great hogs, that were left to pick up what they could in the cornfields after harvest, are now, as

we see them, put into the straw-yard to be fattened up against Christmas, and cured for next year's bacon. But for them, we should have no hams, nor rich mince or pork pies, spareribs or sausages, nor none of that rich bacon which is so nice with roast veal and boiled fowls, nor yet that white lard which makes such flaky pie-crusts and shortcakes. And who is there, that ever sat down to a dinner of ham and green peas, that did not think a pig was a very nice thing when not too fat. Many a poor family rarely taste any other meat; and as it does not take much to keep a pig, and they can grow plenty of cabbages and



**HOGS IN THE STRAWYARD.**



potatoes in a very little bit of garden ground, they sit down and give thanks for so good a meal, and treat the pig kindly, and look at him with loving eyes, though thinking how many stone he will weigh, and about eating him all up after he is killed. Some people make pets of little pigs, and let them come into the house to be fed, and I have heard of one old lady, who, when a very little pig was given her to pet, sent it back with her love, and would they be good enough to keep it until just before Christmas, then she should be much obliged to them, and would have it killed, and cured, and hung up for bacon. Still I

like to see them in the country, in autumn, feeding on the acorns that have fallen from the great oak trees, and which they seem to be very fond of; but were any one to give me a nice little sucking pig, instead of making a pet of it, I should have it stuffed and roasted, and placed on my table along with plenty of applesauce and mealy potatoes, for it is my belief that pigs were sent to us to be eaten, even up to their very tails, and country people say that there is not a bit anywhere about them but what is good. When you think of the trouble the little old woman had who went to market to buy a pig, before she got home, to get some

supper ready for her good man, I am sure you will say that it would have tried your patience sorely ; had it been yours, and if the stick had not banged the dog, and the dog laid hold of the pig by the ear, I think the old man would have gone to bed without his supper that night. I have heard say that a pig will run up nine streets at one time if it has the chance, sooner than go the way the pig-driver wants it, but I never could see very clearly how it could run up so many streets at once — can you ?

See — in yonder field — harvest has begun ! There the reapers are hard at work cutting down the ripe

corn with their sharp, crooked sickles. Were we a little nearer, we could hear the hard brown ears of wheat rattle together as the reaper presses them down, and cuts them off about a foot above the ground ; after which he binds them into sheaves, each sheaf about as thick as you could clasp in both your arms ; after that, the sheaves are piled into shocks, the stubble end resting on the ground, and the corn standing up higher than your head, one leaning against the other, with an opening at the bottom for the air to pass through the shock, and dry the sheaves. The last thing is the wagon, that comes to carry them

away to be piled into a large corn-stack, that contains many hundreds of sheaves ; and, when that is well thatched over, the harvest is gathered in. Then the poor gleaners come into the field, to pick up the ears of corn which the reapers have let fall ; and many a poor woman and her children glean enough to supply them in bread half through the winter.

When a little boy, I was a gleaner, and went into the cornfield with a large pocket before me, and a pair of scissors hanging from a string by my side ; and when I had gleaned a handful of corn, I cut the straw off to within two or three

inches of the great brown ripe ears, and rammed the ears well down into the pocket. When that was full, I went under the hedge, where my dinner-basket was standing, and where I had placed a large, coarse bag, — bigger than a pillow-case, — and into it I emptied my pocket of corn, cramming it hard down ; then I began to glean again, filling the pocket and emptying it into the bag until it was nearly night, when I went home, having gleaned as much corn as I could carry on my head : and very tired I was, after such a long, hard day's work, for I was but a very little boy, and began to glean at five in the morning, after walking

above two miles. Then my legs and hands were very sore, through moving among the hard, sharp stubble which the reapers left standing, about a foot high, after they had cut down the corn ; and which was almost as hard and sharp as a field of iron-skewers, all standing with their points up, and their heads fast in the earth. And as poor little boys only wore stockings in winter, and as you could not pick the ears of corn up with gloves on had you worn them, you may be sure it was sharp work moving your feet through, and putting your hands into those keen, hard straw stubs,

which, in some places, were as close as they could stick.

Then, after gleanings-time was over, we beat out the corn on the floor with a stick; and, when that was done, carried it in a sack to some field, and, spreading a sheet on the ground, took a basin of corn and chaff out of the sack, and, holding it up as high as we could, let it fall gently on the sheet, while the wind blew all the chaff away over the fields, as it did the thistle-down when it was ripe: and when we had done, only the clean, bright, brown grains of corn were left, which we again carried home in the

sack. Then we had to take it to the mill to be ground ; and the miller was a great thief, and kept about a quarter of it for what he called *toll*, and made us pay him besides in money ; but one day the wind blew his mill-sails down, and all the people said it served him right for taking twice as much toll as he ought to have done ; and, by so doing, robbing the poor gleaners, who had picked it all up an ear at a time. Still it was very pleasant to eat the sweet bread which you had got through your own hard labor, and which nobody had worked for to feed you with, though you was but

a very little boy ; and I often think those little girls and boys are the happiest who help their parents to support them, and never eat the bread of idleness.

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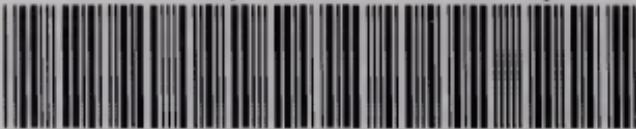
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